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ANNUAL REPORT

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**NN** Near North Health  
We'll Find a Way

# Dear Friends,

Oh, what a year! The last twelve months have been challenging to say the least. The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the nation's healthcare system to its limits. But, time and time again, the system and its workers demonstrated a remarkable resiliency and commitment to patient care.

At Near North Health, our team of dedicated providers, nurses, and non-clinical staff came together like never before to ensure we could fulfill our mission to deliver health care to medically underserved communities and serve vulnerable populations throughout the City of Chicago.

We developed new workflows to treat patients in our health centers safely. We were at the forefront of efforts to offer COVID-19 testing and bring COVID-19 vaccinations to some of the hardest-hit neighborhoods in the City. Additionally, we developed a wellness program to address staff stress and burnout.

The last year has also created opportunities for community health centers like Near North Health to rethink how and where health care is delivered, adopt innovations that meet the evolving needs of our patients, and remove barriers to care.

Through our strong partnership with Humboldt Park Health, we expanded our footprint to include a new health center on the Northwest Side – our ninth comprehensive location. We embraced telehealth so patients and clients could keep up with treatment for chronic conditions and behavioral health therapies and address new clinical concerns. We purchased a mobile clinical van through special grant funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) that will increase access to screening, primary care, and preventative services for adults and children.



*Berneice Mills-Thomas  
Chief Executive Officer*



*Honorable Clarence Burch  
Chair, Board of Directors*

And, to top it off, we debuted a new name – Near North Health -- and a rebranding campaign that reaffirms our commitment to deliver care no matter the circumstances. Because at Near North Health, **We'll Find a Way!**

Thank you for the critical role you play in supporting Near North Health.

Our successes, especially during these challenging times, are only possible because of donors, sponsors, community partners, advocates, providers, staff, and patients like you!

Sincerely,



Chief Executive Officer



Chair, Board of Directors

After more than 55 years since our founding, the time finally arrived to refresh our brand. On April 1, 2021, Near North Health Service Corporation officially became Near North Health. We simultaneously unveiled new logos and a marketing tagline – *We'll Find a Way*.

The new name and brand identity allowed us to re-introduce Near North Health to the Chicago market. In focus groups, participants said they were unaware of everything we do and who we serve.

This initiative will help expand and extend our work in historically underserved communities in the City by emphasizing what makes Near North Health special – our history, our dedication to community, the affiliations we have with first-class partners, our promise to provide patient-centered, culturally-competent care.

While our name might be new and our logo looks different, our mission to providing accessible, high quality healthcare remains the same. We will continue to serve patients regardless of their ability to pay and work toward bringing health equity to all neighborhoods in Chicago.



# NNH and HPH to Open new Health Center

Near North Health and its long-term partner, Humboldt Park Health (formerly Norwegian American Hospital), have collaborated to open Razem Health Center on the Northwest Side at 2844 North Milwaukee Avenue. The new health center's name, Razem, translates to "together" in Polish and is a nod to the original residents of the community.

Talks began two years ago about potential new programs for the collaborators. HPH believed NNH could address the community's unmet healthcare needs with the health center and it would add to the diversity of NNH, which largely serves African-Americans and Hispanics/Latinx, said NNH Chief Executive Officer Berneice Mills-Thomas.

Currently open 2 ½ days a week, the health center, which opened July 19,



*NNH's Razem ("Together") Health Center opened at 2844 N. Milwaukee Avenue on July 19, 2021, with the support of Humboldt Park Health.*

health center like its eight peers in the organization, and be open full-time, she said. Patients at the new location have access to an after-hours call service that will connect them with a provider to advise them on their health concerns.

Near North Health has had a relationship with Humboldt Park Health for about 30 years or longer, Mills-Thomas said. She pointed to the NNH Women, Infants and Children program operating on the main floor of the hospital at 1044 N. Mozart, and the services of HPH midwives for pregnant patients at NNH health centers who often deliver their babies at Humboldt Park Health Hospital.

"It's one of our strong partners in the community of health," she said of HPH.

The health center provides services to patients of all ages on a sliding fee schedule, regardless of their ability to pay. Services offered at other NNH health centers, such as podiatry or oral health, are also accessible to Razem patients.

The new health center will serve the Lakeview, Logan Square, Lincoln Square, Portage Park and Irving Park communities.

# Telehealth Offers New Tool for Healthcare Providers

The pandemic has touched almost every aspect of daily life since early 2020, not the least of which includes how health care is delivered to patients and clients. Enter telehealth. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), telehealth means receiving care from a provider without having an in-person visit. It's done over the phone or video chat, as well as via text message or email.

Near North Health has conducted 20,229 telehealth visits since the start of the pandemic.

"I was a little skeptical at first. How much could I really do over the phone?" wondered Near North pediatrician Dr. Will Stanford. "But then you start doing it and you realize you can do a good amount on the phone or video," he added.

"Video is great to identify rashes. Sometimes, too, you can just look at a kid and tell that they need to go to the emergency room. Or, you can tell a parent to keep watching the child at home. It gives me and the parent extra comfort when I can do that by video."

Our launch of telehealth wasn't without challenges and growing pains. Regulations and reimbursement rates were constantly evolving. Some providers weren't sure which platform was best to use. Some patients didn't know how to use the technology at home. Others were easily

distracted during their telehealth visits.

"I tried to have therapy sessions with clients who were driving their cars or walking around the grocery store," said NNH counselor/therapist Erika Lewis. "So while I prefer to see clients in person, telehealth was a nice option to have to connect with clients who did not want to come in for services."

The COVID-19 pandemic will end one day; what's the future for telehealth then?

"I definitely think it will stick around in the future. Ideally, I would use telehealth, specifically video calls, in combination with in-person sessions for my clients," said Lewis.

Dr. Stanford agrees telehealth, in one form or another, is here to stay. "Even as we've returned to some of our old ways of doing things, people are still now calling to schedule video visits. A lot of our patients travel a long way to get to one of our health centers, sometimes over an hour. If telehealth can save them that trip, then it's invaluable for them."

Telehealth may not be a panacea to all healthcare issues, but, rather gives providers another tool in their medical bag that will help Near North Health achieve and sustain positive health outcomes for our patients.

# ‘Professor NNH’ Prepares Students for Jobs in Real World

Near North Health is more than just a healthcare provider. It’s also ‘Professor NNH’ for a wide variety of college and post-graduate students in Chicago.

“It’s just part of [our] mission, training all types of students,” said NNH Chief Executive Officer Berneice Mills-Thomas.

The most recent educational opportunity is helping Northwestern Medicine Feinberg School of Medicine students to have early and comprehensive educational exposure to team-based medicine in an authentic outpatient environment. In the Education Centered Medical Home (ECMH) program, students work with the same preceptor and peers over four years to help care for patients and measure their progress. ECMH was established to provide students with experience in a primary care setting.

It is similar to the current NNH/A. T. Still University program that teaches osteopathic students in a community health setting, with the goal of getting more medical students to choose a primary healthcare career serving medically under-served populations. The National Association of Community Health Centers-endorsed program began as a pilot program at NNH six years ago, and has graduated approximately 55 students.

Other student training programs partners include John H. Stroger Cook County and Northwestern Medicine Hospitals. We are training social workers and Loyola university nutritionists, conducting nurse practitioner practicums at NNH health centers, and working with students who are studying for master’s degrees in public health.

“We are committed to forming training experiences that provide professional development for all students/interns.”

*-- Dr. Algean Garner II, Dir., NNH Behavioral Health*

The importance of Near North Health to train and work with medical students is mutually beneficial, said Kelly Sauer, NNH Regional Medical Director. “It allows students to obtain exposure to the community clinic setting to improve interest in the health promotion of the underserved population, exposure to a diverse set of provider practice styles, and allows providers to dig deeper into medical diagnosis and explanations of treatment guidelines improving patient outcomes.”

Dr. Algean Garner II, Director of the NNH Comprehensive Services department, said “The overarching goal of the training at NNH is to provide the opportunity to develop competence in the application of psychological knowledge and practice to clinical problems in a complex medical setting. The patients we serve present with complex medical and behavioral health needs and our training program prepares our students to manage these types of patients.

“We value trainees from diverse backgrounds and strongly encourage applicants from diverse cultural backgrounds to participate in our program,” he added.

# NNH Part of Collaborative to Improve Health on South Side of City

Near North Health is a part of a coalition that secured approximately \$26,000,000 in July 2021 to implement innovative, technology-driven and patient-centered approaches that can dramatically transform and improve the system of care delivery for South Side residents.

This South Side Health Transformation Project (SSHTP) is a network of federally qualified health centers including NNH, the University of Chicago Medical Center, and community hospitals located in the zip codes and communities that make up the South Side of Chicago.

Several NNH sites--Komed Holman, 4259 S. Berkeley St., Cottage View, 4829 S. Cottage Grove Ave., and Reavis School-Based health centers, 834 E. 50<sup>th</sup> St.--are part of the collaborative.

The majority of residents in the service area are African-American. These health disparities reflect a history of racial inequities and underinvestment – both of which have contributed to a fragmented healthcare delivery landscape with limited resources.

The City of Chicago Public Health Department released “The State of Health for Blacks in Chicago” report on June 16, 2021, which examined the top drivers for growing life expectancy gap between Black and non-Black residents. Among many findings, the report estimates Black people in Chicago live 9.2 fewer years than non-Black people, have a

## **SOUTH SIDE HEALTHY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION**

70 percent higher death rate for diabetes-related issues, account for half of people living with HIV, are three times more likely to experience opioid-related overdose deaths, and experience infant mortality rates that are nearly three times higher than non-Black children.

SSHTP plans to use the funds to establish a new, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization – the South Side Healthy Community Organization (SSHCO) – as the vehicle by which it will facilitate, in partnership with the community, healthcare transformation on Chicago’s South Side.

The SSHCO plans to focus on primary and specialty care access, preventive and chronic care management, care coordination and management, provider collaboration, community engagement, and a connected digital and technological infrastructure.

The SSHCO also plans to hire additional primary care physicians and hundreds of community health workers, increase access to specialists, build community partnerships around social determinants of health like access to food and transportation, establish a Community Advisory Council and start developing a technology platform that will connect all South Side healthcare providers.

# NNH Changes to Respond to COVID-19 pandemic

## Health Center Finds New Ways to Protect Patients, Deliver Services in FY2021

COVID-19 is a multi-tentacled pandemic reaching into many facets of our daily lives and workplaces. Its far-reaching effects impacted not only our homes and lifestyle, but the way we take care of ourselves and each other. Healthcare was changed forever.

### PATIENT/STAFF SAFETY

Administrative staff kept an eye on the quickly developing phases of the pandemic through daily review of both local, state and federal health sites such as Chicago and Illinois Departments of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As new information was released with daily briefings, Near North Health adjusted its work environment to maintain the safety of staff and patients.

Near North Health started with the basics, deep cleaning the health care facilities often throughout the day. We worked tirelessly to source and secure high-demand personal protection equipment (medical masks, hand sanitizer, surgical gloves) for staff, instructed them to wash their hands often, cough into their elbows and not touch people (elbow ‘bumps’ were used instead of handshakes). Patients and staff have their temperatures taken upon entry into the health center as a first step to diagnose COVID-19. Staff must also show their COVID-19 vaccination cards or be tested weekly if they have not been vaccinated.



*NNH Director of Nursing Crystal Flowers-Carson and Director of EIS, M.A.T. and Special Medical Services Dr. Bonnie “Pete” Thomas prepare for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations.*

Patient waiting areas and conference rooms were rearranged so that social distancing (keeping at least 6 feet apart) was maintained.

Government and foundation grants allowed for capital and program improvements to help fight COVID-19. Those included the installation of Plexiglas® shields in areas where staff and patients interact, i.e., patient registration, and in staff work areas to reduce the transmission of the virus. Entryways were built near the public safety desks to reduce the unchecked, free flow of patients throughout the health centers. In the dental operatories, air cleaners were installed to remove airborne particles and create a safe environment for dental patients and staff. Ventilation systems were upgraded in the health centers.

Near North Health was able to purchase a mobile healthcare van for COVID-19 testing and vaccinations. This allows Near North Health to meet our patients in their communities, at safe, convenient locations, when transportation or other barriers restrict them from accessing healthcare at any of our nine health centers and 2 auxiliary Women, Infants and Children sites.

#### COVID-19 TESTING

When COVID-19 emerged as a public health threat throughout FY2021, Near North Health was ready to take its place on the front lines of testing and, eventually, vaccination.

We offered daily drive-up and walk-up COVID testing at Komed Holman Health Center and weekly testing at Winfield Moody Health Center. We also partnered with

#### **Some of our community partners in COVID-19 testing/vaccinations:**

- Congressman Danny K. Davis
- Aldermen Brian Hopkins (2<sup>nd</sup> Ward), Walter Burnett Jr. (27<sup>th</sup> Ward), Ariel Reboyras (30<sup>th</sup> Ward), Harry Osterman (48<sup>th</sup> Ward)
- A Phillip Randolph & Belmont-Cragin Elementary Schools
- Chicago Park District--Kedvale Park & Moore (Maurice) Park
- Compassion Baptist Church
- Hartzell Memorial United Methodist Church
- Holy Angels Church
- Living Word Christian Church
- Love, Peace & United Mobilized Outreach Event
- Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago
- Our Neighbor's Promise
- Over The Rainbow Association
- Parkside Community Academy
- R.I.S.E. Re-entry Program
- Rogers Park Presbyterian Church
- St. Josaphat School
- St. Matthew's Church

Visit [www.nearnorthhealth.org/covid-19](http://www.nearnorthhealth.org/covid-19) to view media coverage of our vaccine events.

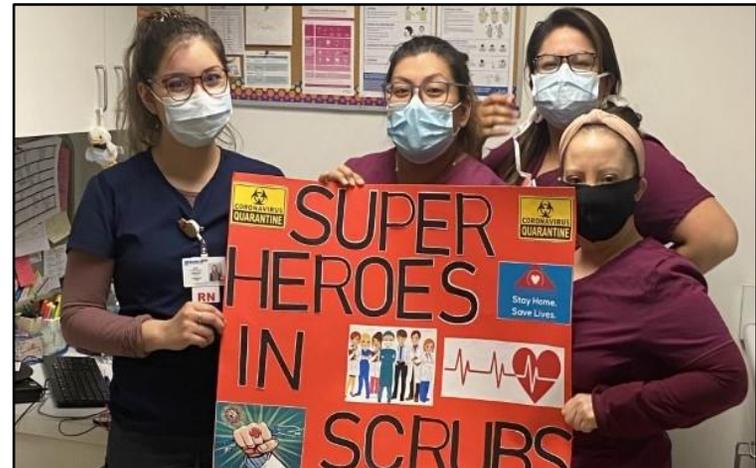
the City of Chicago, Chicago Public Schools, elected officials and dozens of churches and community-based organizations to offer regular, as well as pop-up, testing clinics throughout Chicago. Testing was offered for free, regardless of the patient’s insurance status. To date, we have performed more than 8,000 COVID-19 tests.

Testing was only half of our commitment to addressing COVID-19 in our communities – equitable distribution of vaccination was the other.

Near North Health was ready when the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued the emergency use authorization for the Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson vaccines. We began outreach to our elderly and high-risk patients to educate and inform them about getting their vaccination at one of three Near North locations – Winfield Moody, Komed Holman and Louise Landau Health Centers. As supply increased, we worked with our community partners to coordinate off-site vaccine events, similar to our testing efforts.

Our first and largest vaccine clinic was held on March 28, 2021, at Rising Sun M.B. Church in the Austin neighborhood. We collaborated with Congressman Danny K. Davis and Howard Brown Health Center to administer more than 1,000 vaccinations to people from age 18 all the way to age 100.

Since then, in addition to regular vaccination appointments at our health centers, we have conducted more than 10 pop-up vaccination clinics throughout the City. We have administered a total of 7,896 doses to more than 4,600



*Several Near North Health pandemic “super heroes” at work.*

distinct patients.

#### IT AND TECHNOLOGY

The IT department responded by implementing technology that allowed non-clinical staff to work from home. It also implemented telehealth measures that allowed departments to work with patients between alternate health sites. For example, the psychiatrist was able to conduct telehealth mental health sessions from one site with patients located at another NNH health center. The Oral Health Department was able to conduct telehealth dental screenings and exams during times when the dental operatories were closed for safety reasons during the pandemic.

Telehealth has opened new doors for Near North Health, and we look for additional ways to integrate it into our programs and services both during and after the pandemic.



## CEO Inducted into NACHC Hall of Fame

Each year, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) honors a cadre of health center champions with induction into its Grassroots Advocacy Hall of Fame. Berneice Mills-Thomas, Near North Health's CEO, was among the class that was honored in March 2021.

Ms. Thomas was nominated by her peers for the lasting contributions she and her fellow inductees have made to ensuring the creation, survival and strength of community health centers and the health center movement in general through their dedicated and tireless efforts over many years.

### *Berneice Mills-Thomas*

Ms. Thomas serves on the boards of the AllianceChicago C-Quest and the Illinois Primary Health Care Association, and holds memberships with the National Association of Community Health Centers.

With a career in health care that spans more than 40 years, Ms. Thomas is dedicated to improving the health and well-being of individuals and families who reside in low-income, medically underserved communities. Prior to NNHSC, she held managerial and clinical positions in several community health centers and two community hospitals in Chicago.

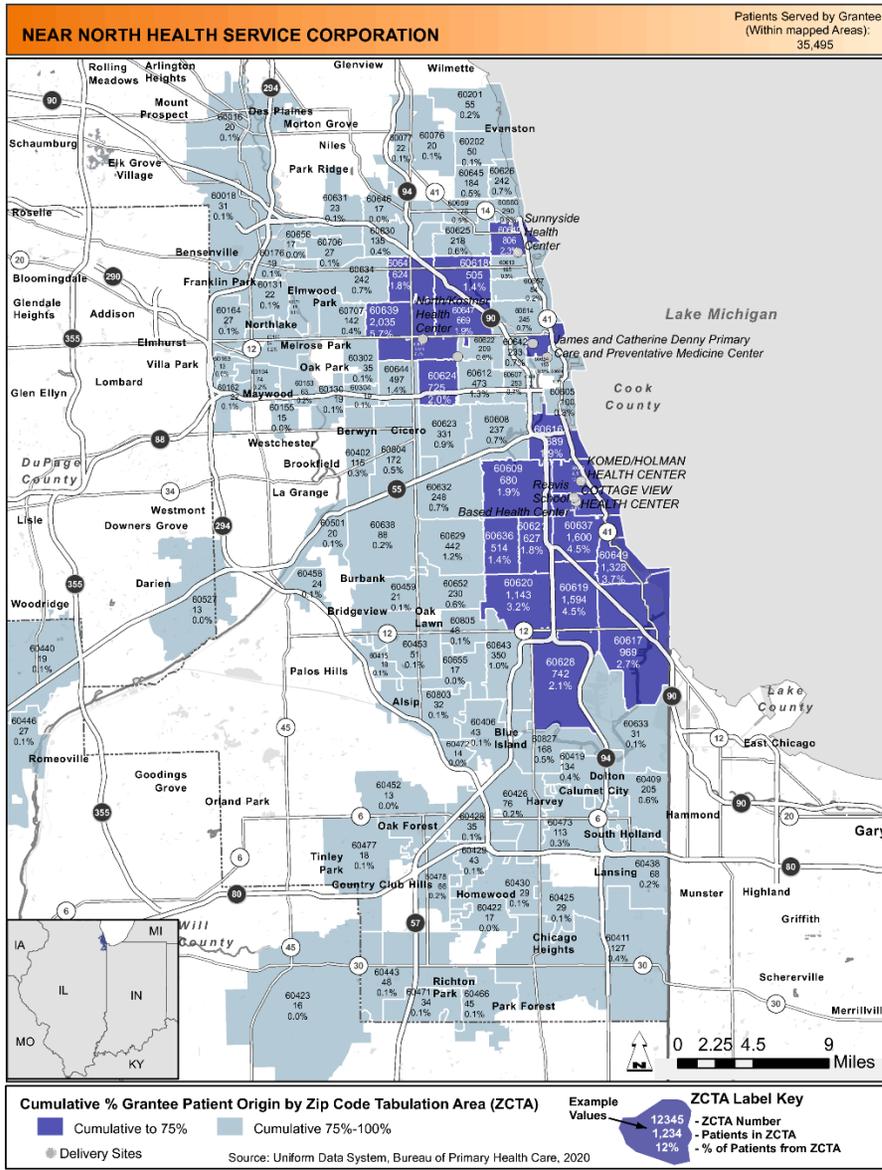
## Near North Health Accepts 2020 Wintrust Financial Corp. Award

On September 23, 2020, Berneice Mills-Thomas accepted the 2020 Wintrust Partners in Innovation Award presented by Wintrust Financial Corporation. This award recognizes an innovative community development collaboration. Near North Health earned this award for our innovative collaboration partnership in the area of resident services with Mercy Housing Lakefront.

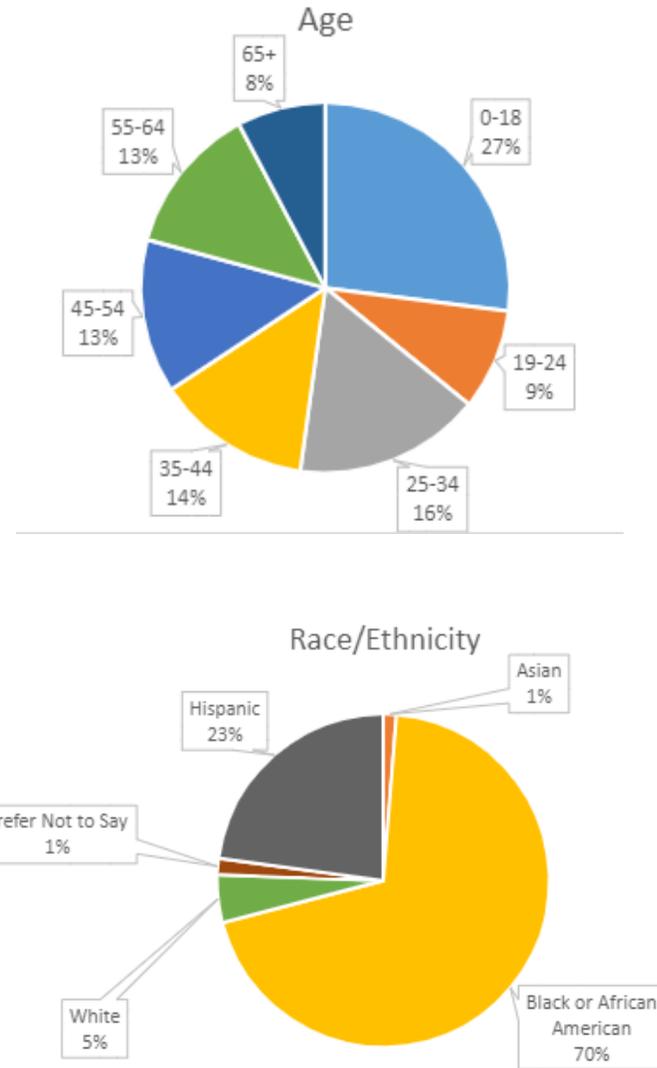
Near North Health is a long-term partner with Mercy

Housing Lakefront in providing health care services to residents. In recent years, Near North Health expanded the partnership by providing a nutrition education program, substance abuse counseling, community health education services, and clinical supervision for the Community Health Worker Program. Additionally, Near North Health's innovative efforts continued during the COVID-19 pandemic by ensuring Mercy Housing Lakefront residents had access to COVID-19 testing services.

# Where NNH Patients Live



# Who NNH Serves



# DONORS

## **\$250,000 and Above**

A.T. Still University  
Chicago Department of Public Health  
Health Resources and Services Admin.  
Illinois Department of Human Services  
Mercy Housing Lakefront  
Northwestern Medicine

## **\$100,000 - \$249,999**

Ann & Robert H Lurie Children's  
Hospital of Chicago  
Chicago Department of Public Health  
Illinois Children's Healthcare Foundation

## **\$50,000-\$99,999**

AllianceChicago & Illinois Contraceptive  
Access Now (ICAN)  
Illinois Department of Public Health

## **\$25,000-\$49,999**

AllianceChicago  
IL Public Health Institute  
Lloyd A. Fry Foundation  
Michael Reese Health Trust  
Northwestern Psychiatry

## **\$10,000-\$24,999**

AllianceChicago  
American Pharmaceutical Drug Co.

Illinois Department of Public Health  
NextLevel Health Partners  
Northern Trust Charitable Trust  
The University of Chicago

## **\$5,000-\$9,999**

AF Group  
AllianceChicago NACDD  
Anonymous (2)  
JPMorgan Chase  
LabCorp  
McCormick Network  
Intern Funds  
NMF PCLP Program Site Honorarium  
United Way of Metropolitan Chicago  
The University of Chicago –  
Medical Center

## **\$1,000-\$4,999**

American Lung Association  
Bank of America  
Berneice Mills-Thomas  
Chicago Park District  
Fifth Generation Tito's Vodka  
Illinois Primary Health Care Ass'n

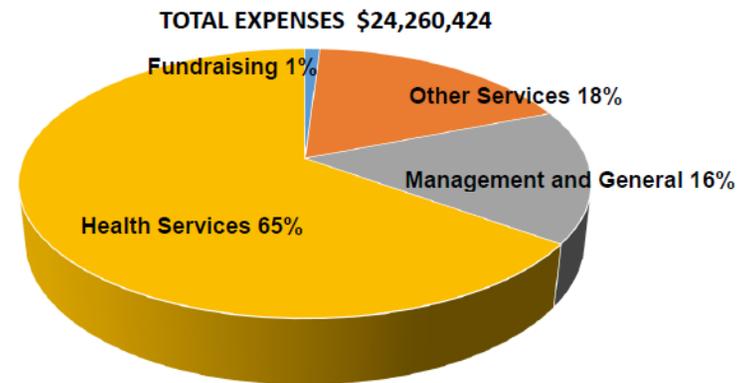
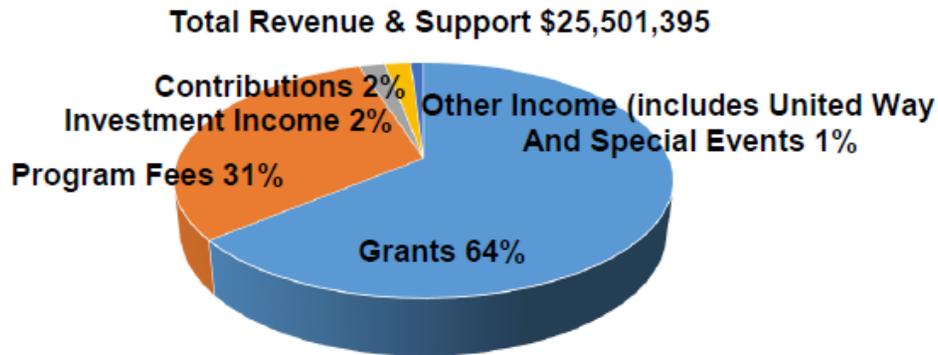
IL State Physical Activity  
and Nutrition  
Leopardo Foundation  
Matanky Realty Group  
National Association of  
Community Health Centers  
Target  
University of Illinois

## **\$499 and Under**

Benefit Community Impact Fund  
Blue Jean Fundraiser  
Double Good Fundraiser  
Fidelity Charitable  
Illinois Primary Health Care Ass'n  
Johnny & Mary Richardson  
Judy Juenger  
Kathleen & Michael Jackson  
LeAnna Harris  
Mary and Sidney Brow  
TH Foods dba Terri Lynn  
Trader Joe's  
Walmart  
Zelle's--TONN  
Zulekhaunisa Shaik

# 2021 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Near North Health enjoys a diverse funding base, including federal, state and local grants, contracts, program fees, and contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations, and community-based organizations.



Near North Health Social Media Links			
Website	<a href="http://www.nearnorthhealth.org">www.nearnorthhealth.org</a>		Near North Health Service Corporation
	Near North Health Service Corporation - NNHSC		Near North Health Service Corporation
	@NearNorth_HSC		@nnhsc

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission of Near North Health (NNH) is to provide access to high quality health care to improve the health and well-being of the diverse communities we serve. We are a culturally sensitive and culturally competent, patient-centered community health center that empowers individuals through education, disease prevention, and health promotion, regardless of one's ability to pay. We seek to employ innovative, evidence-based practices and leverage technology to achieve and sustain positive health outcomes for our patients.

## **VALUES**

- Compassion ..... we demonstrate that we care, in all we do
- Excellence ..... we promote the highest standards of quality across the organization
- Innovation..... we find creative solutions and challenge the status quo
- Integrity ..... we hold ourselves and each other accountable
- Safety ..... we dedicate ourselves to promoting a safe and secure environment
- Diversity ..... we appreciate, respect and are prepared to serve all
- Empowerment ..... we educate and build skills for self-sufficiency and resiliency
- Advocacy ..... we promote optimal health of our patients and their communities

## **VISION STATEMENT**

To be nationally recognized and locally known as the patient centered medical home of choice that lives by its values and is trusted and respected by an informed and engaged patient population.

## NEAR NORTH HEALTH CENTERS (WIC SITES<sup>W</sup>)

### COTTAGE VIEW

4829 S. COTTAGE GROVE AVENUE  
773.548.1170

### DENNY COMMUNITY

150 E. HURON STREET, STE. 1107  
312.741.8554

### KOMED HOLMAN<sup>W</sup>

4259 S. BERKELEY STREET  
773.268.7600

### LOUISE LANDAU<sup>W</sup>

800 N. KEDZIE AVENUE  
773.826.3450

### NORTH KOSTNER<sup>W</sup>

1520 N. KOSTNER AVENUE  
312.216.8020

### RAZEM<sup>W</sup>

2844 N. MILWAUKEE AVENUE  
773.661.3349

### REAVIS SCHOOL-BASED

834 E. 50<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
773.358.6767

### SUNNYSIDE<sup>W</sup>

4140 N. Broadway  
773.878.8098

### WINFIELD MOODY<sup>W</sup>

1276 N. CLYBOURN AVENUE  
312.337.1073

## WIC AUXILIARY SITES

### HUMBOLDT PARK HEALTH HOSPITAL CENTER

1044 N. FRANCISCO AVENUE, MAIN FLOOR  
773.486.0126

### CHICAGO NUTRITION AND EDUCATION CENTER

1734 W. CHICAGO AVENUE  
773.227.8022

